



Public Participation and the European Water Framework Directive (HarmoniCOP)

Project

Research Program

[FP 5](#)

Duration

Oct 2002 - Aug 2005

[HarmoniCOP](#)

The Water Framework Directive restructures the legislative frame for the protection of European water bodies and establishes new approaches to an integrated and comprehensive management of river basins. Part of these novel approaches is the explicit requirement for an involvement of interest groups and the public at large in the different implementation phases of the Directive.

The main objective of the HarmoniCOP (project duration 2002 – 2005) project, which was funded under the 5th European framework for Research, was to increase the understanding of participatory river basin management in Europe. It caters to the paradigm that river basin management can only be effective and sustainable if the actors at each level and in each phase and sector become engaged in a social learning process.

The HarmoniCOP project is based on an analysis of current approaches and methods to participatory river basin management in nine European countries. Ecologic's role involved analysing German experiences and best practices in this area. Based on this research, case studies were developed in each of the participating countries, with the purpose of serving as best practice examples. The experiences and methodological insights were compiled in the [HarmoniCOP handbook](#) which provides practical guidance to decision-makers in water management, thus providing for a hands-on application of the principles of public participation in a river basin context. Additionally, an [Ecologic Brief](#) gives an overview of the main results and policy implications of the HarmoniCOP project. The project and the drafting process for the handbook itself was also conducted in a participatory way with representatives from NGOs, local governments, policymakers, water industry and farming participating as external advisers.

Ecologic Institute was responsible for compiling the [national study for Germany](#), which focused on the Rhine and Elbe basins and mainly analysed the origins and past experiences of public participation approaches in water management.

In addition, Ecologic Institute also supported the Institute for Environmental Systems Research at the University of Osnabrück in conducting a real-time [case study in the Elbe basin](#). The main research focus of this study was the interplay of authorities and the various interest groups. Ecologic Institute's portion of the report focused on the Havel river basin, which was also investigated in the context of a project funded by the Berlin Centre of Competence for Water (KWB) on "[Public participation in the Havel coordination area \(Berlin-](#)

[Brandenburg](#)".

Funding

European Commission, [Directorate-General Research](#) (DG Research), International

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Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment, [Rijkswaterstaat](#) (RIZA), Netherlands
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Duration

Oct 2002 - Aug 2005

Project ID

[1975](#)

Keywords

[Water](#)
Implementation, Water Framework Directive, Public Participation, River Basin Management, Water Management
Europe